

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An absorbent garment for wear about a wearer's waist, said absorbent garment comprising:

a garment shell configured for encircling the wearer's waist and having a front waist region, a front waist end at said front waist region, a back waist region, and a back waist end at said back waist region, the garment shell comprising a front panel assembly having laterally opposite side margins, and a back panel assembly having laterally opposite side margins; and

10 an absorbent assembly disposed within the garment shell and constructed to take in and retain body exudates released by the wearer, the absorbent assembly having an inner surface adapted for contiguous relationship with the wearer's body, an outer surface, a front waist region in opposed

15 relationship with the front waist region of the garment shell, a back waist region in opposed relationship with the back waist region of the garment shell, a crotch region extending longitudinally between and interconnecting the front waist region and the back waist region, a front waist

20 end and a back waist end, the absorbent assembly being attached at the front waist region thereof to the garment shell generally at the side margins of the front panel assembly to together define front side margins of the absorbent garment, said absorbent assembly further being

25 attached at the back waist region thereof to the garment shell generally at the side margins of the back panel assembly to together define back side margins of the absorbent garment, the front side margins and the back side margins of the absorbent garment being releasably attached to

30 each other to removably secure the absorbent garment on the wearer's waist.

2. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein at least a portion of the front waist end of the absorbent assembly is attached to the front waist end of the garment shell and at least a portion of the back waist end of the 5 absorbent assembly is attached to the back waist end of the garment shell.

3. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the absorbent assembly has laterally opposite outer edges at the front waist region of said absorbent assembly and corresponding laterally opposite outer edges generally at the 5 back waist region of said absorbent assembly, the absorbent assembly being attached generally at the laterally opposite outer edges of the front waist region to the garment shell generally at the side margins of the front panel assembly and being further attached generally at the laterally opposite 10 outer edges of the back waist region to the garment shell generally at the side margins of the back panel assembly.

4. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 3 wherein the absorbent garment has laterally opposite front side panels extending laterally outward generally at the front waist region of the absorbent assembly and having respective 5 outer edges defining the outer edges of the absorbent assembly at said front waist region, and laterally opposite back side panels extending laterally outward generally at the back waist region of the absorbent assembly and having respective outer edges defining the outer edges at said back 10 waist region of the absorbent assembly, the front side panels being attached generally at the outer edges thereof to the front panel assembly of the garment shell generally at the side margins of said front panel assembly, the back side panels being attached generally at the outer edges thereof to

15 the back panel assembly of the garment shell generally at the side margins of said back panel assembly.

5. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the absorbent garment has at least one outer leg opening and a pair of inner leg openings separate from the at least one leg opening and disposed within the garment shell, the  
5 absorbent assembly at least in part defining said inner leg openings of the absorbent garment, said garment shell defining said at least one outer leg opening of the absorbent garment.

6. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 5 wherein the absorbent assembly is configured to provide an elastic fit of the absorbent assembly against the wearer's legs at the inner leg openings of the absorbent garment, the garment  
5 shell being configured to generally hang loose about the wearer's legs at the at least one outer leg opening of the absorbent garment.

7. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 5 wherein the absorbent assembly is configured to encircle the legs of the wearer and fully defines the inner leg openings of the absorbent garment.

8. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 5 wherein the garment shell further has a crotch region extending longitudinally between the front and back waist regions of the garment shell, the crotch region of the garment shell at  
5 least in part defining a pair of outer leg openings of the absorbent garment which are separate from the inner leg openings of the absorbent garment.

9. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 8 wherein the crotch region of the absorbent assembly is free from attachment to the crotch region of the garment shell.

10. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 further comprising at least one waist elastic member operatively joined to at least one of the front waist end of the absorbent assembly, the back waist end of the absorbent 5 assembly, the front waist end of the garment shell and the back waist end of the garment shell to provide an elastic fit of the absorbent garment against the wearer's waist.

11. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the absorbent assembly is elastically stretchable at least at said front and back waist ends of said absorbent assembly, the front and back waist ends of the absorbent 5 assembly being operatively joined respectively to the front and back waist ends of the garment shell to gather the garment shell generally at the front and back waist ends of said garment shell.

12. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the absorbent garment has a waist opening, the absorbent assembly being configured to encircle the waist of the wearer generally at the front and back waist ends of the 5 absorbent assembly to fully define the waist opening of the absorbent garment.

13. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 12 wherein the absorbent assembly is a brief-style absorbent assembly.

14. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the garment shell has a configuration selected from the group comprising shorts, skorts, skirts and swim trunks.

15. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the absorbent garment has a waist opening, at least one outer leg opening, and laterally opposite side seams

extending generally from the waist opening to said at least  
5 one outer leg opening, the absorbent garment being  
refastenable along at least a portion of each of said side  
seams.

16. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 15  
wherein the absorbent garment is refastenable along the  
entire length of each of said side seams.

17. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1  
wherein the absorbent garment has laterally opposite front  
side margins and corresponding laterally opposite back side  
margins, the front side margins and the back side margins  
5 being in overlapping relationship with each other to define  
laterally opposite side seams of the absorbent garment, the  
amount of overlap of the front side margins with the back  
side margins being in the range of about 0.1 inches (2.5 mm)  
to about 6 inches (152.4 mm).

18. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 17  
wherein the amount of overlap of the front side margins with  
the back side margins is in the range of about 0.5 inches  
(12.7 mm) to about 3 inches (76.2 mm).

19. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 1  
wherein the absorbent assembly comprises a liquid permeable  
liner defining the inner surface of the absorbent assembly  
adapted for contiguous relationship with the wearer, an outer  
5 cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner and  
defining the outer surface of the absorbent assembly, and an  
absorbent body disposed between the liner and the outer  
cover.

20. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 19  
wherein the outer cover of the absorbent assembly is liquid  
impermeable and the garment shell is liquid permeable.

21. An absorbent garment for wear about a wearer's waist, said absorbent garment comprising:

a garment shell configured for encircling the wearer's waist and being further configured as a pair of shorts having  
5 a pair of leg openings defining outer leg openings of the absorbent garment; and

an absorbent assembly disposed within the garment shell and constructed to take in and retain body exudates released by the wearer, at least a portion of the absorbent assembly  
10 being attached to the garment shell, said absorbent assembly having an inner surface adapted for contiguous relationship with the wearer's body, an outer surface, a front waist region, a back waist region, and a crotch region extending longitudinally between and interconnecting the front waist  
15 region and the back waist region of the absorbent assembly, said absorbent assembly at least in part defining inner leg openings of the absorbent garment wherein said inner leg openings are separate from the outer leg openings of the absorbent garment;

20 the absorbent garment further having a waist opening, laterally opposite front side margins and corresponding laterally opposite back side margins, the front side margins and back side margins being at least in part defined by the garment shell, said front side margins of the absorbent  
25 garment being in overlapping relationship with said back side margins of the absorbent garment to define laterally opposite side seams of the absorbent garment wherein the side seams each have a length extending generally from the waist opening of the absorbent garment to a respective one of the outer leg  
30 openings of the absorbent garment, said side seams of the absorbent garment each having a respective upper segment along which the front side margins and back side margins of the absorbent garment are attached to each other, said upper

segment having a length extending from the waist opening of  
35 the absorbent garment to less than about 50 percent of the length of the side seam, the front side margins and the back side margins of the absorbent garment being free from attachment to each other along the remaining length of each respective side seam generally from the upper segment of said  
40 side seam to the respective outer leg opening of the absorbent garment.

22. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21 wherein the amount of overlap of the front side margins of the absorbent garment with the back side margins of the absorbent garment is in the range of about 0.1 inches (2.5 mm) to about 6 inches (152.4 mm).

23. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 22 wherein the amount of overlap of the front side margins of the absorbent garment with the back side margins of the absorbent garment is in the range of about 0.5 inches (12.7 mm) to about 3 inches (76.2 mm)

24. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21 wherein the front side margins of the absorbent garment and the back side margins of the absorbent garment are releasably attached to each other at the upper segments of the side  
5 seams of the absorbent garment.

25. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21 wherein the garment shell comprises a front panel assembly having laterally opposite side margins and a back panel assembly having laterally opposite side margins, the  
5 absorbent assembly being attached at the front waist region thereof to the garment shell generally at the side margins of the front panel assembly to together define the front side margins of the absorbent garment, said absorbent assembly

10 further being attached at the back waist region thereof to  
the garment shell generally at the side margins of the back  
panel assembly to together define the back side margins of  
the absorbent garment.

26. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21  
wherein the absorbent assembly further has a front waist end  
and a back waist end, the garment shell also having a front  
waist end and a back waist end, at least a portion of the  
5 front waist end of the absorbent assembly being attached to  
the front waist end of the garment shell and at least a  
portion of the back waist end of the absorbent assembly being  
attached to the back waist end of the garment shell.

27. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 25  
wherein the absorbent assembly has laterally opposite outer  
edges at the front waist region of said absorbent assembly  
and corresponding laterally opposite outer edges generally at  
5 the back waist region of said absorbent assembly, the  
absorbent assembly being attached generally at its laterally  
opposite outer edges of the front waist region to the garment  
shell generally at the side margins of the front panel  
assembly, the absorbent assembly being further attached  
10 generally its laterally opposite outer edges of the back  
waist region to the garment shell generally at the side  
margins of the back panel assembly.

28. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 27  
wherein the absorbent garment has laterally opposite front  
side panels extending laterally outward generally at the  
front waist region of the absorbent assembly and having  
5 respective outer edges defining the outer edges of the  
absorbent assembly at said front waist region, and laterally  
opposite back side panels extending laterally outward  
generally at the back waist region of the absorbent assembly

and having respective outer edges defining the outer edges at  
10 said back waist region of the absorbent assembly, the front  
side panels being attached generally at the outer edges  
thereof to the front panel assembly of the garment shell  
generally at the side margins of said front panel assembly,  
the back side panels being attached generally at the outer  
15 edges thereof to the back panel assembly of the garment shell  
generally at the side margins of said back panel assembly.

29. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21  
wherein the absorbent assembly is configured to provide an  
elastic fit of the absorbent assembly against the wearer's  
legs at the inner leg openings of the absorbent garment, the  
5 garment shell being configured to generally hang loose about  
the wearer's legs at the outer leg openings of the absorbent  
garment.

30. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21  
wherein the absorbent assembly is configured to encircle the  
legs of the wearer and fully defines the inner leg openings  
of the absorbent garment.

31. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21  
wherein the absorbent assembly further has a front waist end  
and a back waist end, the garment shell also having a front  
waist end and a back waist end, the absorbent garment further  
5 comprising at least one waist elastic member operatively  
joined to at least one of the front waist end of the  
absorbent assembly, the back waist end of the absorbent  
assembly, the front waist end of the garment shell and the  
back waist end of the garment shell to provide an elastic fit  
10 of the absorbent garment against the wearer's waist.

32. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21  
wherein the absorbent assembly further has a front waist end

and a back waist end, the garment shell also having a front waist end and a back waist end, the absorbent assembly being  
5 elastically stretchable at least at the front and back waist ends of said absorbent assembly, the front and back waist ends of the absorbent assembly being operatively joined respectively to the front and back waist ends of the garment shell to gather the garment shell generally at the front and  
10 back waist ends of said garment shell.

33. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21 wherein the absorbent garment has a waist opening, the absorbent assembly having front and back waist ends and being configured to encircle the waist of the wearer generally at  
5 the front and back waist ends of the absorbent assembly to fully define the waist opening of the absorbent garment.

34. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 33 wherein the absorbent assembly is a brief-style absorbent assembly.

35. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 21 wherein the absorbent assembly comprises a liquid permeable liner defining the inner surface of the absorbent assembly adapted for contiguous relationship with the wearer, an outer  
5 cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner and defining the outer surface of the absorbent assembly, and an absorbent body disposed between the liner and the outer cover.

36. An absorbent garment as set forth in claim 35 wherein the outer cover of the absorbent assembly is liquid impermeable and the garment shell is liquid permeable.